

## SPEAK UP

Here's how these area residents answered the question, "If you were serving in Iraq and you were provided food, water, and only one other item of your choice, what would that item be?"

"Hygiene product."	Amy Mars, homemaker
"A cell phone."	Ricky Main, student
"Family photos."	Kyle Mars, student
"A picture of mom and dad."	April Miller, student
"A Bible."	Frances Fleming, office manager
"A Bible."	B.J. Williams, secretary

*Brittany Mars, a sophomore at Southeast Lauderdale High School, compiled this Speak Up question. She enjoys horseback riding, riding four-wheelers, shopping and spending time with friends. She plans to pursue a career as a veterinary technician.*



ILLUSTRATION BY ZOE BROOKS

## HONORING U.S. TROOPS

This picture was drawn by Zoe Brooks, a student at Highland Baptist Church Child Development Center. Zoe, 5, is the daughter of Joey and Meredith Brooks. The children at the center were asked to create a message to the troops through their artwork.

# A letter from the girls

*Cyndy Bratu is assistant risk manager at Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian. She organized this group effort by the entire family for her husband, Maj. Jerry L. Bratu of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion at Key Field. Jerry left Meridian bound for Iraq on Christmas Day and is expected to be gone about a year.*

**Hey honey!**

Let me first start by saying how proud of you the girls and I are. We know it is hard to be so far away. We are proud of what you are doing for their country and their people — and for our country.

I miss you tons and can't wait to see you again. We will be a year older, and we will have changed in any number of ways, but the love we have for each other will be even stronger.

Everyone here is praying for you and everyone else in the bat-

talion. The support of friends and co-workers has been unbelievable. I know you are in good hands with the number of prayers going up for you.

I can't wait to see you. It will be here before we know it. Soon, we will be able to pick up our lives where we left off and enjoy the next several decades. Don't forget there is an island somewhere with our names on it.

Be careful honey. I love you and miss you tons. Duck!!

**Cyn**

I haven't made my decision yet. I'm praying for you. Tell everyone else in your unit that I'm praying for them also.

**Jady (aka "A Teenager")**

**Daddy,**

I miss you and hope you come home soon. You have done so much for us. I love you so much. I don't want to lose you in the war. Be safe and don't get hurt. I pray and talk in Girls in Action about you. I don't want you to go away again for as long as you live.

**Erin**

**Dear Dad,**

I really miss you a whole lot. I hope you are all right. I want you to try as hard as you can.

**Bethany Bear**

**Hey Daddy,**

I just wanted to say I love you. School is going OK. Band is awesome. I can't wait until next year when we get to march and play at football games. I'm thinking about quitting cross-country so I can play soccer, but



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## WAITING AT HOME

Major Jerry Bratu of the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion is shown with his wife, Cyndy, and their three daughters. In the front are Bethany, left, and Erin; Jady is standing next to her mom.